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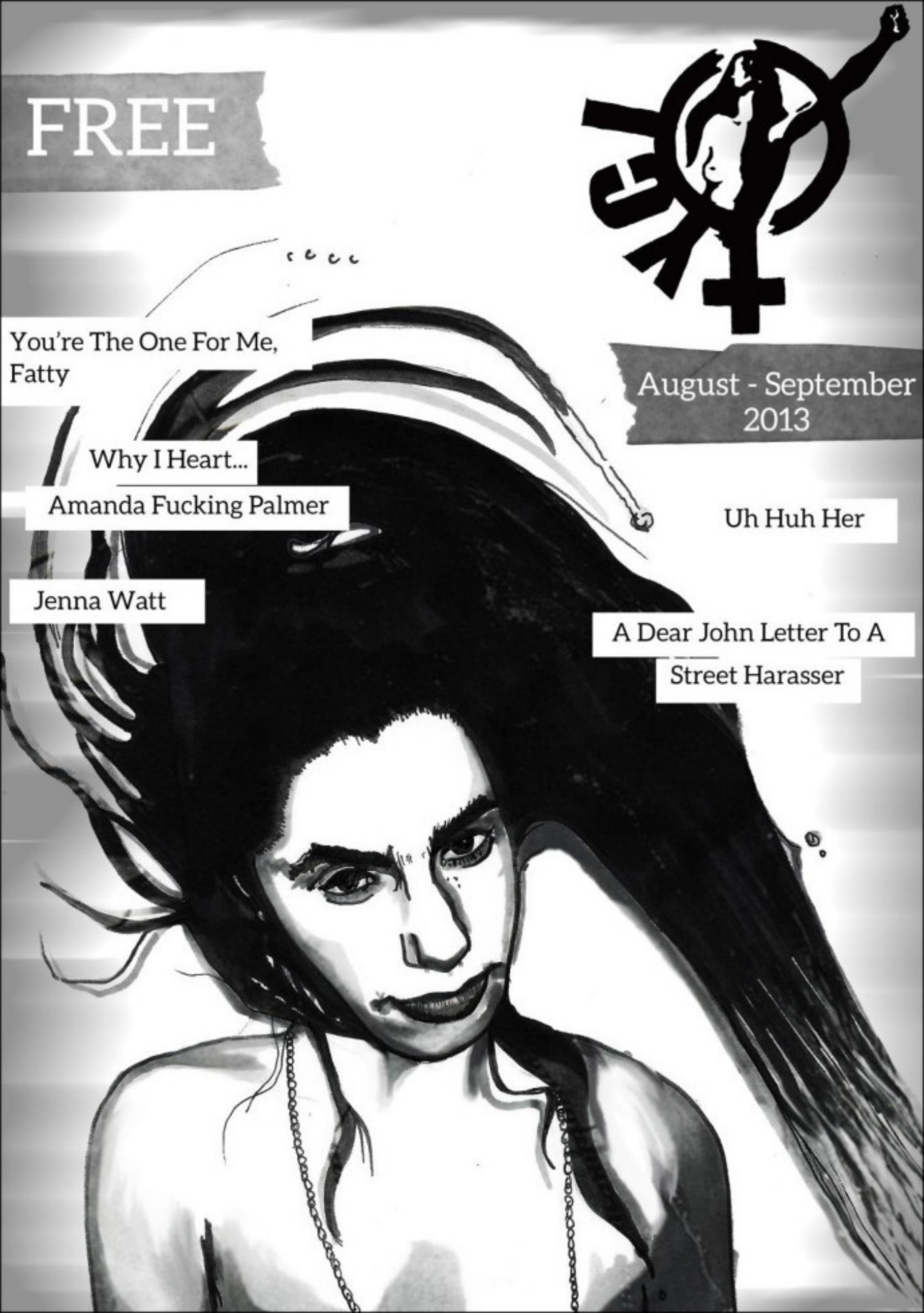


August - September 2013

You're The One For Me, Fatty

Why I Heart...

Amanda Fucking Palmer

Uh Huh Her

Jenna Watt

A Dear John Letter To A Street Harasser

YOU'RE THE ONE FOR ME, FATTY

By Halina Rifai

I was 10lb 8oz when I was born, several years later my mother needed a pelvic floor repair because I had destroyed her. When I asked her what exactly her cravings were, she replied 'fruit' – the irony.

34 years on and I have grown proportionally to my birth weight, i.e. I am still a large mammal. When you are fat/overweight/chubby etc. it is the first thing you think about each day. I just want to dispel the theory that you don't think about food as soon as your eyes open. Other thoughts that have run through my head include 'what the hell am I going to wear to make me more inconspicuous' and 'I swear today is going to be my healthy day'.

My childhood never had a lack of food, when I first heard the phrase 'big boned' I latched onto it and looking back I can laugh now. My dad is Moroccan and as part of the culture, if you don't eat then it can be seen as a bit of an insult. My mother is British and came from the traditional Sunday Roast and 'Fish Friday' so food was constantly in abundance between them. I wouldn't exactly put them in the category of 'feeder'; they just cared about their kids and wanted to make sure they were provided for…

For a female being fat, the pressure is excruciating. You have heard all the clichés about magazine covers and the industry, for me it is not about that. It is more about wanting to wear the stuff that everyone is wearing. I love fashion, another myth that I would like to dispel. Just because I am a number of sizes larger does not mean I don't appreciate looking good. As everyone keeps saying 'you have such a pretty face', another phrase that makes me want to laugh. I often wonder when the full package will be accepted. A terrible admission on my part is that I often look at skinny girls who make absolutely no effort with their appearance and scream on the inside as all I want to do is give them a makeover. I realise this makes me the biggest hypocrite on the planet as they are probably screaming on the inside at me saying 'lose some fucking weight and you could be so much prettier'.

Another pressure is the looks and the sniggers. For someone with something different on the inside such as depression it is way easier to hide. When I waddle into a room then everything is there for everyone to see. I was at a small music festival a few weeks back and this guy who had noticeable skin problems and a shit afro commented on how happy I looked. I replied 'well the music is wonderful', to which he replied 'it is a good job you are leaving then, you can make room for some other people'. It is really hard to not let something like that ruin your evening. As soon as he said it I immediately felt myself want to crawl into my own vagina and hide. The sinking feeling hits and then the paranoia sets in and your eyes start darting about to see who else is looking at you and laughing. It is heart-breaking.

I managed to shift a large portion of Halina a few years back, 6 stone to be precise. The attention became a bit weird and after a terrible break up the weight piled back on. Part of the reason I wanted to lose the weight was that I sat on an outdoor piece of furniture and it collapsed. It was very funny, but inside I died a little. Other thoughts that haunt me are if I have a bath and the combined weight of me and the water will mean that I end up in the downstairs neighbour's livingroom. Jesus Christ, I don't know who would shit themselves more.

Food is my personal evil; having managed to quit smoking without any real difficulty many people still cannot understand why I can't quit food. It is a vicious circle, you wake up on

a Monday thinking that you are going to be good and before you know it, that extra mayonnaise is being piled onto the cheese that was leftover from the weekend. WHY DOES FOOD TASTE SO FUCKING GOOD…?

I am now in a relationship with someone that loves me, I still ask him why. No seriously, I do. I have this stupid idea that I don't want to embarrass him and make him look any less of a man because he is with a 'fatty'. Ironically, there is the 1992 hit by one of his heroes Morrissey called 'You're the One for Me Fatty' – I have decided we are therefore made for each other.

I suppose the point of this is that I am getting there. I guarantee when I walk into a room or past you, I will probably be thinking about what I look like more than you will and hopefully it is more of my personal gremlin than yours, just don't pull up a garden chair for me. PLEASE.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. HALINA ALSO RUNS GLASGOWPODCART.COM AND OLIVEGROVERECORDS.

Jemma Watt

Rosa Campbell speaks to the award-winning live artist, director and theatre maker

photo by Tamsin Drury

YOUR PIECE IT'S OK, IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY WAS BANNED. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT?

In 2010 I made a performance for a 'scratch' night, it was a really early exploration of a theatre piece I was making. The piece involved what I've come to call an 'apple smashing action' where I would pitch apples with one arm and smash them with a baseball bat with the other in the direction of the audience. The apples would usually explode once hit and spatter over the audience, but the odd chunk made it through. It was a thrilling, exciting and scary moment both for audience and myself. Nobody was hurt, nothing was damaged but a few days later I was banned from the venue for 'reckless endangerment'.

Being banned was tough, word spread quickly and I gained some notoriety because of it. My peers were really supportive but I had to seriously consider whether to abandon this piece of work or not. This ended up being a really important moment in the development of my practice as a theatre maker, as I decided to stand by my own artistic convictions regardless of the outcome. Some great opportunities have come about because of this piece and I've performed it all over the country since. Eventually the ban was lifted after six months, and I'm still trying to rebuild my relationship with the venue but I don't regret it, it was exhilarating.

YOU SEEM TO MAKE A LOT OF WORK AROUND EXPERIENCES OF WITNESSING VIOLENCE. CAN YOU SAY MORE ABOUT THIS?

My practice has recently dealt with violent themes, I think this is because primarily it's a subject I find both frightening and fascinating. I'm interested in my relationship to violence, perceptions of violence as well

as violence and physicality. I'm only 5ft and audiences build a perception of me onstage, I find this puts me in powerful position when I want to talk, show and explore violent acts on stage. It can surprise audiences, it undermines their perceptions.

With my theatre production Flâneurs we explore the Bystander Effect, which is a social psychological phenomena that prevents us from intervening when we witness a violent act. I was interested in understanding why we don't intervene, what we are afraid of and how we can overcome this and deconstruct the Bystander Effect.

WHY DON'T WE INTERVENE? WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF AND HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THIS AND DECONSTRUCT THE BYSTANDER EFFECT? HOW DOES FLÂNEURS SPEAK TO THESE UNDERSTANDINGS?

The reasons we chose not to intervene are specific to the individuals involved and the situation itself. I don't intervene because I don't believe I'm strong enough or 'skilled' enough to successfully diffuse a violent situation, I'm afraid of being hurt, of failing. According to the 'bystander effect' we often choose not to take responsibility for what we witness, we allow responsibility to diffuse amongst other bystanders, believing the person next to us is better equipped to deal with the situation.

I believe in the first instance that an awareness of the Bystander Effect, which Flâneurs seeks to expose, and how it affects our behaviours around violence or emergency situations will inevitably deconstruct the Bystander Effect. Personally, I've chosen to chose empower myself, since making the show I've taken a self defence course and I'm a lot more confident about more ability to handle potentially violent situations.

FLÂNEURS COULD BE DESCRIBED AS NARRATIVE PIECE - IT'S A PIECE OF THEATRE ABOUT REAL EVENTS AND IT'S CONSEQUENCES.

Part of a theatre makers craft is to distill big ideas into a piece of work and make it engaging for an audience. One approach that I use is to show not tell, make these big ideas inherent to the piece without necessarily being in the text, instead use imagery and movement to convey this ideas.

I'm not sure I'll ever be finished with Flâneurs, as long as there's an audience for it, I'll keep performing it. However, I'm starting a couple of new projects this year, I'm still in the embryonic stage with the ideas, so they won't come to fruition until 2014 and 2015. But I'm hoping to work much collaboratively with musicians, dancers and pyrotechnicians!

AND FINALLY, WHO DO YOU ADMIRE IN THE LIVE ART WORLD AND WHAT SHOWS HAVE YOU SEEN RECENTLY THAT YOU'VE LOVED? WHY?

I'm influenced a lot by my own contemporaries, theatre makers such as the TEAM, Bryony Kimmings, Action Hero, Third Angel, Untitled Projects, Forced Entertainment, to name a few. The last show I loved was Rob Drummond's Game Show at the Traverse Theatre, directed by Hamish Pirie, it was one of those rare productions that's bold, brave, chaotic and beautiful, it made me really excited about making theatre here and now.

FOR MORE ON JENNA'S WORK, VISIT JENNAWATT.CO.UK.

UH HUH HER

Lauren Carter Allan speaks to the electro pop duo about their origins, current activities and future plans

Before I start, I think it's safe to say that Uh Huh Her isn't the easiest of band names to pronounce, but that's okay, as the band admit this themselves, and are more likely to be known simply as 'UHH'. Their music, like their name, is cause for debate – many musical genres seem to influence and blend to make the UHH sound. Lead singer Camilla Grey says: 'We have always described it as indie electo-pop; however we realise there is definitely a rock element to it as well. We think it's great that you can't place it into a genre, so thank you!'

Following their departure from record label Nettwer , from which debut EP I See Red (2007) and debut record Common Reaction (2008) were released, UHH collaborated with their fan base to fund self-produced EPs Black and Blue and EP3, and full length record Nocturnes between 2011 and 2012…

Creativity is at the forefront of this band, in many different forms. Grey's bandmate, Leisha Hailey (bass, keyboard and backing vocals), is the name or face that you may already know, coming from a successful background in television where she played Alice Pieszecki in the Showtime series The L Word for six years. Prior to this Leisha was a musician in the band The Murmurs, which she started with fellow American Academy of Dramatic Arts student Heather Gordy, the band later splitting due to Leisha's commitments to The L Word.

Camilla is a classically trained pianist, having graduated from Berkley School of Music, this entitling her to become a session musician. If you look at her resume she has credits with artists including Dr. Dre, Busta Rhymes, Kelly Osbourne and more recently Adam Lambert. Outside of this she has also been a key member in the band

Mellowdrone and at present

Big Black Delta. 'I love being able to switch it up, so to speak, musically. It keeps my mind occupied and presents a new challenge for me. I also just love the music Jon [Big Black Delta] makes and I am really able to lose myself on stage when I play with them. There is way less pressure to be a front person and I just generally enjoy it in such a different way than UHH. It's truly just about the music with that band...'

Though the world may be changing for the better in terms of equality for women, the music industry still seems to be in the shadows. 'It's still a male dominated industry, and women are continually marginalized for their sex or their sexuality. The amount of women actually playing instruments is dwindling, and rock music seems like a distant memory. Who knows what the future will bring, but I can certainly hope it brings actual musicians who play 'music' again. Male or female is fine with me.'

As well as being female in this environment, UHH are both of the LGBT community, and are in fact in a relationship outside of studios and venues. From day one this has never been a forbidden topic and they have always spoken out regarding these issues. 'I think it's just a part of being an 'out' person living your life. It feels like a natural thing to talk about and we are huge proponents of the change that can come by being open about our lives and hopefully positively affecting others by that openness.'

The core of their original fan base – some directed to the music by way of The L Word – are LGBT, many of whom look up to both Camilla and Leisha in a world where, even though times are changing, out role models are still few and far between in mainstream media. Leisha spoke of her role models growing up: 'I used to watch Facts of Life and Joe was the closest thing to a gay person (or so I thought) I identified with? HA! So I suppose I looked up to her. Even though she's not gay. Does that make sense?' Camilla, on the other hand, says she 'looked up to Madonna. Her sexuality was like an open book (literally) and I appreciated her fearlessness about it all.'

Prior to this interview, Pride month took place throughout the world. The biggest cities have their own Pride event, many of which hire big names to perform, UHH being a must have feature to line ups. 'We love participating in LGBT festivals and the like. They have been huge supporters of us from the very beginning and we are honoured to be a part of it and feel very accepted. I think as long as there is a demand from them for us to be there, then we will gladly accept.'

THIS IS AN EXCERPT. FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON UH HUH HER, VISIT UHHUHHER.COM.

a dear john letter to a street harasser

Hanna Barbaric calls back to the cat callers

Here are the things I would have liked to have said, every time a guy physically or verbally encroached on my personal space when I was in a public place...

DEAR STREET HARASSER. Let's get real. None of this is about sex, not really. This is about domination and power. It makes you feel good to make women feel vulnerable by shouting something at them, whether you deem it be 'complimentary' or obscene.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. Things that I have experienced which are not in fact acceptable ways to greet a woman include, but are not limited to: horn honking; staring; wolf whistles; general cat calling; leering; grabbing / touching of any kind; masturbating; lip licking; the miming of blow jobs with your tongue / cheek; throwing of things.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. I do not need to be flattered by what you are doing. I do not need to take it as a compliment. I do not need to feel like this validates me as a woman. If I want anyone in life to think I'm sexy, attractive or alluring, it's not you. It is me. My partner. My lover. The person whose pants I want to get heavy fired into. Not you.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. Contrary to popular opinion in your ranks, I don't have to 'smile, sweetheart' on command just to make your day go better. Maybe I don't want to fucking smile. Maybe something awful just happened to me. You have no idea.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. It does not matter how I am dressed. It does not matter what I look like, whether you deem that to be good or bad. I am never inviting your comment. I am never asking for it. Mind your own fucking business.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. Why do you get so upset when we talk back? What's the deal with that? We're meant to just passively accept your intrusion into our day-to-day, but when a woman says something back, she is mental / a harpie / a psychopath / a bitch? That seems fair. Luckily a lot of these situations occur at night or when a woman is alone, making it more convenient for you, dear Street Harasser, because then the woman will be altogether too frightened and physically out-manned to even say a word.

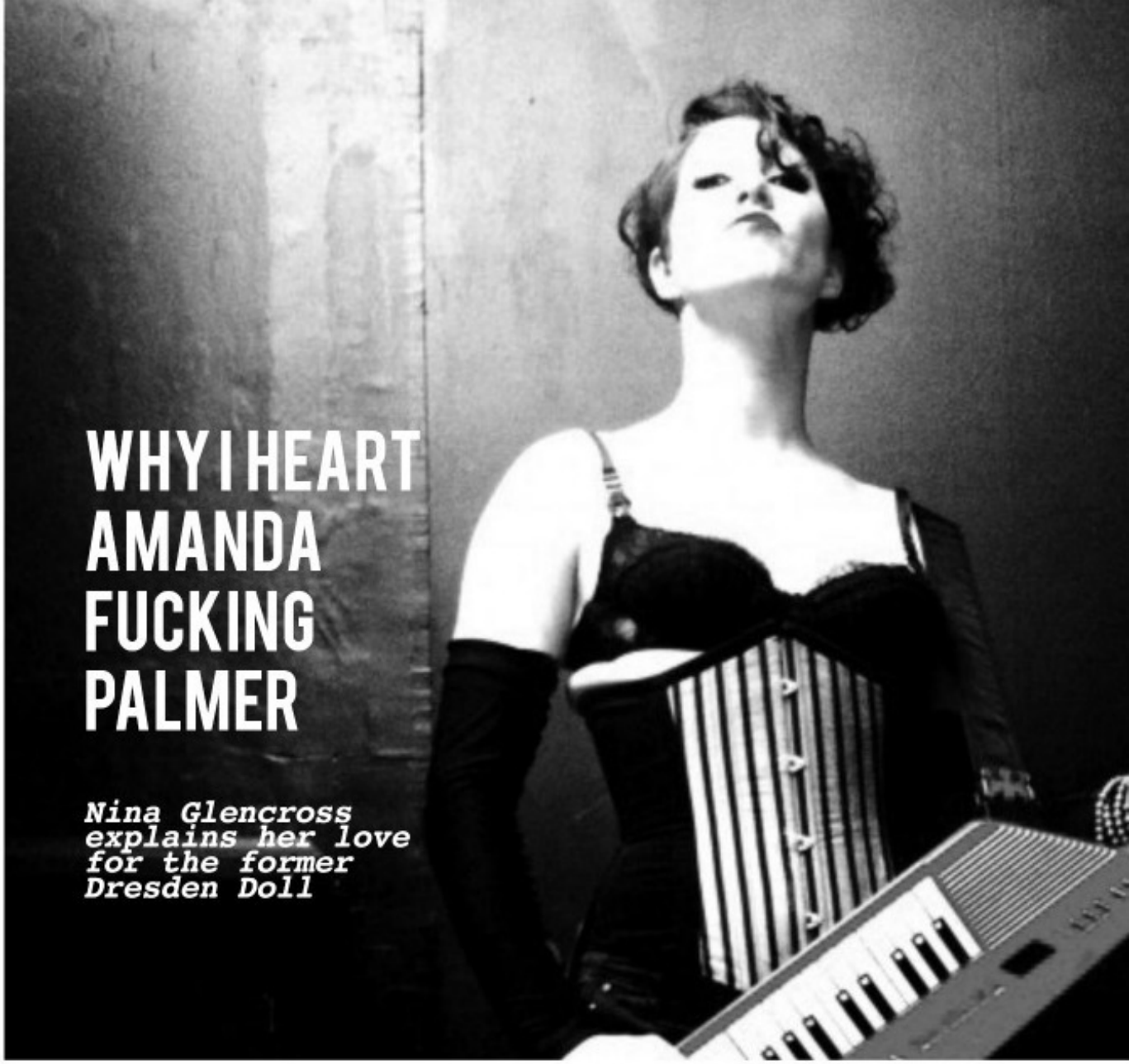
DEAR STREET HARASSER. Thank you for your observation that any woman holding hands with another woman is only ever in need of 'a real man'. We will all bear this in mind when pondering our sexuality in the future as you seem like such an awesome catch, and also I'm pretty sure that's how being gay works, right? Oh, wait…

DEAR STREET HARASSER. The only person I feel more sorry for in this situation than you is your (perhaps non-existent?) partner. It must be pretty emotionally and sexually fulfilling to be with a person so insecure in their own masculinity that they feel the need to re-assert it over every subject with a vagina, just incase anyone was in any doubt. You have a penis. It's great. We get it.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. Presumably you do not have a mother, sister, girlfriend, wife, or any female friends, as – again, I say presumably – you would find it unacceptable for other men to treat them the way that you treat me. Or maybe you do have women you care about in your life, but you have somehow separated them from the women you bully, intimidate and scare. Whatever gets you through the day.

DEAR STREET HARASSER. I wonder if you will ever change, or if you would behave any differently if you could feel how I feel when you do the things you do. The knot in the stomach. The anger, the injustice, the helplessness and the occasional moment of real, unavoidable fear. There is no way of making you see this from the other side, or making you stop. We can only remain vigilant and tell you to shut the fuck up. Enough is enough.

PROJECTS LIKE HOLLABACK! AND EVERYDAY SEXISM AIM TO COMBAT STREET HARASSMENT AND INSTANCES OF SEXISM ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS. VISIT THEIR WEBSITES - IHOLLABACK.ORG / EVERYDAYSEXISM.COM



WHY I HEART AMANDA FUCKING PALMER

Nina Glencross explains her love for the former Dresden Doll

I'd been planning to write this for a good while. As an unapologetic devotee of Palmer for almost a decade (since the early days of her former band The Dresden Dolls), I felt she deserved a place on the TYCI blog. But with her recent show in Edinburgh and the relentless sharing of *that* video from her Roundhouse show in London last week, I felt now was the right time to reveal why I love this woman so much. So here is why I heart Amanda Fucking Palmer...

I heart her because, first and foremost, she is a great artist.
Not just in music, but in writing, in visual art, in theatre and in life. As a member of the Dolls, she created music which she and her drummer Brian Viglione described as punk cabaret – angry pop songs smashed out on piano and drums. From

the moment I first heard that twinkling intro of 'Girl Anachronism' whilst watching 'The Amp' in 2004, I was officially hooked. And from these early punk cabaret days, through her whimsical ukulele period, to the glitter and synth driven 80s inspired tunes of her latest album, her versatile musical style has kept things very interesting over the years.

I heart her because she hearts me back.
The love she has for her legion of fans is unparalleled. No matter what, she takes the time to connect with people, whether it's through Twitter, hanging out after gigs, holding spontaneous 'ninja gigs' and organising fan house parties. When it came to her Kickstarter campaign, many were blown away by her success (she crowdsourced a whopping $1.2m to fund her second solo album 'Theatre Is Evil' and its accompanying tour and book) but when you consider the intense connections she's been making with people for years, it actually wasn't all that surprising.

I heart her because she is a humanist as well as a feminist. She cares about humanity and about women's rights, acknowledging the struggles of women in society through her music: rape, abortion, domestic abuse, pressures on appearance... Having struggled with some internal misogyny through my teenage years, Amanda was one of the first to make me realise that it's OK to be feminine and a feminist. Shave or don't shave. Wear a skirt or wear jeans. It doesn't matter! All that matters is that you love yourself and are comfortable in your own skin. Which brings me nicely to my next point...

I heart her because she preaches self-love.
Her naked antics aren't just a new way of causing controversy and shock. She's been stripping off since she was in college, for goodness sake. Being naked is completely natural for her and she preaches this self-love and body compassion to her thousands of Twitter followers on a regular basis - whether it's the 'Love thy belly' campaign which followed her departure from previous label Roadrunner after they labelled her to be too fat in her 'Leeds United' video, or spreading the muff love with 'Map of Tasmania' – an ode to pubic hair with a guest appearance from the ever awesome Peaches.

She rarely conforms to social stereotypes and with her increasing popularity and penchant for 'controversial' acts, it's fair to say she's attracted a few more haters over the years. But with every new controversy she raises, I tend to just fall that little bit more in love with her. She literally gives no fuck and, in a world full of cynics just waiting to pull you down and criticise your every move, that takes guts.

I've watched Amanda go from punk cabaret pianist to international cult rockstar and thank her for giving me and many other girls (and boys) someone to be truly inspired by in so many ways. Most of all, I thank her for giving us the inspiration to love ourselves and each other and the knowledge that, when we come together, WE ARE THE MEDIA.

As the famous feminist slogan coined by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich goes: "Well behaved women rarely make history." May Amanda continue to misbehave on a historic level.

FOR MORE ON AMANDA'S WORK, VISIT AMANDAPALMER.NET.

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Anyone who writes TYCI on their knuckles will get in free after midnight too

TYCI RADIO / PODCASTS

Episode 3 of the TYCI podcast is online now and can be found at soundcloud.com/tyciblog. Our next Subcity show will be Thursday 12 September, 5 – 7pm. Tune in at subcity.org/shows/tyci.

Subcity Radio

TYCI is a collective run by women.
We have a website where we write about things which affect us and put together features on art, theatre, music, film, politics, current affairs and most things in between. We also talk about similar stuff on our monthly radio show on Subcity.

This zine is a collection of some of the content from our site and is distributed in conjunction with our monthly live event at Bloc.

If you would like to get involved, reply to any of our articles or just generally say hi, hit us up on contact.tyci@gmail.com or visit tyci.org.uk.

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